

School Committee Curriculum Subcommittee

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room, Town Hall

Curriculum Subcommittee Members Present: Barbara Scotto (Chairman), Helen Charlupski, and Susan Wolf Ditkoff.

Other School Committee Members Present: David Pollak and Rebecca Stone.

Staff Present: Andrew Bott, Nicole Gittens, Amy Martin, Lesley Ryan Miller, and Robin Coyne.

Others Present: Brookline High School (BHS) Headmaster Anthony Meyer and BHS Assistant Headmaster Hal Mason.

1) Approval of Minutes of the September 29, 2016 Curriculum Subcommittee Meeting

On a motion of Ms. Charlupski and seconded by Ms. Ditkoff, the Curriculum Subcommittee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 29, 2016 Curriculum Subcommittee meeting.

2) Presentation of the Draft Brookline High School Education Plan

Mr. Bott and Mr. Meyer provided some background, described the development process, which was collaborative, and summarized next steps. Last night the Building Commission selected HMFH Architects to do the Feasibility Study. The Feasibility Study will provide an opportunity to reengage the stakeholders.

Mr. Mason provided an overview of the draft plan (Attachment A). It is paramount that we find ways to retain an atmosphere where students feel connected to adults and vice versa. The great fear is creating an anonymous sea of 2,600+ students where both students and teachers feel marginalized and disconnected from the community. It is also important that all students have equitable access to the school's many academic offerings, as well as co-curricular and athletic opportunities. This supports the school's ongoing commitment to the five core values: high academic achievement for all students, excellence in teaching, understanding and respect for human differences, collaborative relationships, and educational equity. It is critical that expansion plans address the need for teacher collaboration space, co-location of student supports, and an overall campus-wide plan which considers how to make a large more complex environment seem smaller, closer, and more welcoming. Mr. Mason cited the pros and cons of the various models, noting the importance of supporting interdisciplinary initiatives. The Subcommittee members expressed appreciation to Mr. Meyer, Mr. Mason, and the team for the work and progress that has been made on this plan.

Subcommittee Questions and Comments:

- Critical to design flexible use spaces.
- Should look at "time" and scheduling options.

- Include space requirements for specific programs, e.g., Early Childhood Program, Brookline Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT), the African American and Latino Scholars Program, and dance spaces.
 - Perhaps the Curriculum Subcommittee could review graduation requirements. How has the K-8 World Language impacted BHS? Should we require foreign language proficiency instead of course requirements?
 - Need to clarify which growth challenge issues are for the programmers and which are for the architects (with overlap).
 - Parents are concerned that their children won't have the same opportunities as enrollment grows. There may be different models, e.g., a journalism umbrella, with leadership opportunities within the underlying sections.
 - Need to address security and student safety on campus, particularly as it grows.
 - Concerned that the document largely confirms and is satisfied with BHS as it is today and focuses on the lack of space and need for more classrooms. The plan doesn't consider what we might not be doing as well. This is a tremendous opportunity to respond to issues and grow.
 - There are a number of satellite options that are not mentioned.
 - Are block schedules the best scheduling option?
 - Should we consider going back to a house model?
 - Do we have the right number of offerings for 2,500-2,700 students? How would limiting the number of offerings impact equity of access?
 - How does School-Within-A-School (SWS) fit into the plan? What are their space needs? Consider equity issues both with the current program and with a duplicated program.
 - How does the plan respond to what we already know we have to change and the programs that are exacerbated by trying to wedge even more kids into the existing structure that has inherent inequities?
 - We need to think in terms of creativity and responsiveness.
 - Is open campus feasible with that many kids?
 - Should look at and perhaps visit high schools with alternative models.
- [Mr. Meyer: Some of the equity issues are related to structure and some are related to program. BHS is doing things now to move forward. He will present today's feedback to the BHS Administrative Council.]
- Discussed options for a house system – horizontal, vertical, and hybrid (more interest in a house system, in which students are randomly assigned to one house and social emotional supports follow the students for four years, but they take academic classes by department; less interest in a specialized program, e.g., World Language, Fine Arts, STEM, because it could result in inequities.)
 - Don't just look at the needs for current programs/offerings; also consider other models, e.g., interdisciplinary project based learning (e.g., Casco Bay, Maine climate change initiative), partnerships (e.g., Advent School partnership with MIT on design thinking; solar or robotic projects), new ways to apply our educators passions (e.g., engineering, Cambodia, sustainability). How much of this goes in the Educational Plan and how much can be done with flexible spaces?
 - Education will be different in ten years. Plan should express that we have exciting opportunities. What do we need for success? Do we need a certain number of spaces

where a certain number of classrooms can come together? What do we need to do to serve all students well?

- Need to express our overarching vision of student achievement and goals.
- Building configurations should facilitate sharing among teachers and departments.
- We won't have another opportunity like this to make strong change. The plan should reflect what we want to do for learning and how we want to work together, but we shouldn't try to do the architects' job.
- If we want more collaborative learning, we need to say that.

Sample goal statement - "Each student engaged and at home in multiple focused learning communities."

- We need to show the through lines for every department and the overarching principles.

A new draft will be prepared within a couple of weeks.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.